

CPA #2009-T-05 DENSITY IN THE COR ZONE

Initiated by: City of Renton

Applicant: City of Renton

General Description

This text amendment proposes to change Policy LU-279 under the Commercial/Office/Residential (COR) land use designation of the Comprehensive Plan. As proposed, this text amendment looks at changing this policy to eliminate the density ranges and address density by describing its intended intensity. This text amendment further intends to provide the flexibility to increase the density within the Development Regulations for the COR zone to 75 dwelling units per acre through Density Bonus Review. The COR land use designation is intended to provide opportunities for large-scale office, commercial, retail, and multi-family projects. This designation has been applied to very few sites throughout the City.

Text Amendment

Policy LU-279. ~~Maximum residential densities at COR designated sites should provide the flexibility to allow for high density residential development, that could support the potential onsite commercial uses and, at the same time, provide for the opportunity for mixed-use developments that can support the City's employment goals. range between 30 to 50 dwelling units per acre.~~ The same area used for commercial and office development may also be used to calculate residential density.

Impact Analysis

Effect on rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan

This text amendment may have an effect on the rate of growth and development envisioned in the Plan. Allowing an increase in dwelling units per acre could result in a higher concentration of densities on the COR properties throughout the City. The higher concentration of residential densities on site, could result in a loss of potential office and/or commercial uses that would be developed on the COR properties. This amendment would "pave the way" to further allow densities up to 75 dwelling units per acre if the applicant provided additional amenities such as, affordable housing, mixed-use, open space, superior site and/or architectural design or significant environmental enhancement or restoration.

This amendment would not change the height, setback, lot coverage, or other development standards required today. As such, this text amendment should not change the intensity or scale of potential development on the COR sites. Although, it could change the percentage of types of uses provided within a development, i.e. increase residential units or decrease commercial square footage. This text amendment is not anticipated to have an effect on conversion of land.

Effect on the City's capacity to provide adequate public facilities

Additional density within the COR designation would not affect the City's capacity to provide adequate public facilities.

Effect on the rate of population and employment growth

This text amendment is anticipated to have an effect on the rate of population and employment growth. This amendment would provide the opportunity for an increase to the maximum residential density for the COR designated sites. By increasing the amount of residential density

that could be permitted on a site, you may see a reduction in the amount of commercial development on that same site. This text amendment would not preclude the developer's ability to develop or redevelop a site for exclusively commercial purposes.

Based on the Buildable Lands Report of 2007, the gross acreage of vacant COR land within the City is 30.90 acres, of which 12.55 acres have been designated as "land with residential capacity". The gross acreage of redevelopable COR land within the City is 60.57 acres, of which 23.93 acres have been designated as "land with residential capacity". The 2007 report further indicates that 197 residential units currently exist on the 60.57 acres of redevelopable land. The table below depicts how the proposal to change the maximum density would affect the potential residential growth on vacant and redevelopable lands within the COR zoning designation.

Maximum Residential Development Potential (for "land with residential capacity")		
Maximum Density (dwelling units per acre)	50 (existing)	75 (density bonus)
Vacant COR Land (12.55 acres)	627	941
Redevelopable COR Land (23.93 acres)	1,196	1,794

This text amendment could theoretically increase residential growth by 1,597 dwelling units (1,794 theoretical maximum density – 197 existing residential units) on COR redevelopable lands and 941 dwelling units on vacant COR lands. Please remember that these numbers are theoretical and approximate and all COR lots have the potential to be developed without a residential component.

Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable

Objective LU-CCC states that COR developments should be cohesive, high quality, landmark developments that are integrated with natural amenities. Changing the densities allowed within the COR land use designation would not preclude new development from meeting this objective. High quality cohesive development can be met with increased densities. Policy LU-272 indicates that COR designations should include "mixed-use complexes consisting of office, and/or residential uses..." this textual change would continue to be consistent with this policy and other policies within the Comprehensive Plan, that recognize the COR designation as a mixed-use, high intensity, and landmark development designation.

Effect on general land values or housing costs

This text amendment would provide greater flexibility to the developable/redevelopable COR sites within the City. As mentioned above, this amendment would not change any development standards already required by the COR designation, although it would provide an opportunity to increase the maximum density for the COR zoning designation. Consequently, the development capacity for commercial or other uses would remain the same. It is important to note that a development could still be created that was primarily, if not entirely commercial, on COR sites. As such, it is anticipated to increase the land value because this amendment could increase the available development potential on COR sites and provide greater flexibility in development options.

Whether capital improvements or expenditures are being made or completed as expected
Not applicable.

Consistency with GMA, the Plan, and Countywide Planning Policies

The COR properties are concentrated in two specific locations. There is a cluster of properties near the Cedar River along Maple Valley Highway as you enter the City of Renton's downtown core area. The second cluster of properties is located along Lake Washington and Lake Washington Boulevard, as you enter the City from the north on I-405. The Comprehensive Plan envisions these properties as gateways to the City. As gateways, these areas are intended to be developed as mixed-use centers with high concentrations of commercial and residential uses. These areas are to become centers for residential and employment growth in the City of Renton. This text amendment would continue to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's vision for the COR designation.

GMA has identified 13 different goals that jurisdictions shall implement within their Comprehensive Plans. These goals include, but are not limited to, the encouragement of development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided and the reduction of inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development. This text amendment is consistent with these two GMA goals. The COR properties that are available for development (vacant land) were once industrial lands, specifically The Stoneway and Quendall Terminals sites. These sites provided a unique opportunity for infill development in an existing urban area. The large size of these sites allow for a cohesive planning effort that would promote GMA goals and Countywide Planning Policies by providing residential densities that could support a large mixed-use development. The conversion of these lands into high density, cohesive landmark developments would further support GMA's goals to reduce low-density sprawling land development patterns.

Effect on critical areas and natural resource lands

The COR sites contain critical areas: Lake Washington and the Cedar River, which are both shorelines of the state. In addition, streams, wetlands, and steep slopes are all potential critical areas associated with properties within the COR designation. This text amendment is not anticipated to have an effect on critical areas, as this change is not anticipated to change intensity of uses allowed on COR sites.

Effect on other considerations

Not applicable.

Review Criteria

RMC 4-9-020G states that the proposal shall demonstrate that the requested amendment is timely and meets at least one of the following criteria:

1. The request supports the Vision embodied in the Comprehensive Plan, or
2. The request supports the adopted business plan goals established by the City Council, or
3. The request eliminates conflicts with existing elements or policies, or
4. The request amends the Comprehensive Plan to accommodate new policy directives of the City Council.

This amendment meets Criteria #2. The Business Plan directs "...future growth...to mixed-use areas created outside of downtown." The Business Plan continues to encourage "...maximum land efficiency, even outside of Urban Center, and strive for development that is more intense than typical 'suburban' prototypes". Achieving urban densities vs. suburban densities ideally would "...result in a reduction of transportation impacts within the City by allowing residents to work and shop close to where they live..."

Staff Recommendation

Amend Policy LU-279 of the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan to state:
"Policy LU-279. Residential densities at COR designated sites should provide the flexibility to allow for high density residential development, that could support the potential onsite commercial uses and, at the same time, provide for the opportunity for mixed-use developments that can support the City's employment goals. The same area used for commercial and office development may also be used to calculate residential density."

And:

Staff recommends the approval of an increase to the potential maximum density in the COR zone to 75 dwelling units per net acre subject to conditions in RMC 4-9-065, Density Bonus Review.

Implementation Requirements

Renton Municipal Code section 4-2-120B, Development Standards for Commercial Zoning Designations and section 4-9-065 Density Bonus Review, should be amended to reflect the above changes (see Attachments A and B).